





## ***ECLIPSE***

Sternwheel paddle wheeler built in Le Claire, IA, 1882. 124.9 x 24.6 x 4.1. Engines, 13's-5ft. Three boilers, each 30" diameter by 16ft. She was built for the Lindsay & Phelps Lumber Company, and towed rafts until the mills shut down in 1904. Then Capt. John Lancaster, Le Claire, who held interest in the boat, and had commanded her as a rafter, bought Capt. John Streckfus's warehouses at Davenport and Clinton, and entered ECLIPSE in the trade. A street care line had been opened, and so this venture was not a success, but it was a last effort to run a packet between those cities. She later ran in the Dubuque/Prairie Du Chien trade, and in 1913 was laid up in the Cat Tail Slough south of Albany, IL, where she sank. Capt. Ralph Emerson Gaches bought her to tow his showboat. He was making a trip with her from Pittsburgh to Sisterville, WV, with an Atlantic Refining Co. gas barge on the night of December 8, 1917 when she struck the dike at the foot of Neville Island, Ohio River, and burned and sank.



## *The Packet Eclipse Towed Rafts, Showboats*



### **The Eclipse Was Probably "Posing" for This Picture**

By JAMES V. SWIFT

In looking over the names of rooms at the St. James Hotel in Red Wing, Minn., named after upper Mississippi River vessels, we failed to find one honoring this nifty looking packet, the Eclipse. Perhaps when, and if, the St. James expands, there will be a room of some sort named for this boat that started out as a rafter and later turned to the passenger trade. (Or maybe the Creeping Bear room could be renamed.)

The Eclipse was built in 1882 at LeClaire, Iowa, with a hull 124.9 by 24.6 by 4.1 feet. The steamer was owned by Lindsay & Phelps and the Cable Lumber Company, Davenport, Iowa. Capt. E. J. Lancaster did his last rafting on the Eclipse; in fact, Capt. Walter A. Blair reports in his "Raft Pilot's Log" that Capt. Lancaster ran all the logs for these two sawmill companies from 1885 until they shut down in 1904.

#### **In the Packet Trade**

When the rafting business played out Capt. Lancaster made some changes in the Eclipse to handle passengers and ran her for three or four seasons in the packet trade, first between Clinton and Davenport, Iowa, and later between Prairie du Chien, Wis., and Dubuque, Iowa.

This work did not prove successful and Capt. Lancaster sold the Eclipse over to service on the Ohio River. Capt.

Ralph Emerson used her for towing showboats, including the Cotton Blossom.

Capt. Emerson still owned the boat in 1917 and had her chartered out to the Atlantic Refining Company. On the first trip, towing an empty gasoline barge, a high wind jammed the Eclipse against a dike at White Ripple, opposite Corapolis, Pa., during the night of December 8, 1917. There was a "fence" made of timber nailed to piles outside the dike and the bow of the boat penetrated this stockade. The force of the collision apparently overturned the stove in the galley, and in a few minutes the area was a furnace. The crew escaped in the yawl.

The Eclipse had just come out of the Rees boatyard after extensive repairs and was said to be valued at \$45,000.

#### **Recalls Milton Layfield**

After reading the comments of Milton Layfield on the str. Monongahela in our December 29, 1979, issue, Steve Mackinack, Elizabeth, Pa., wrote: "Yes, I knew Milton Layfield for many years and found him to be nice personally as an engineer, with a nice smile and real good words. When I decked on the Donora he was chief engineer. Chief Layfield went as a machinist foreman on the marine ways and he was a real fine foreman. I knew his brother Dave who was on the Old Homestead as a chief engineer."





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